

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMCONSUL MEDAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 829

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMCONSUL SURABAYA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEDAN 0057

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINDS, ID, SOPN

SUBJECT: ARRESTS IN NORTH SUMATRA AND ACEH

REF: JAKARTA 2081

1. DURING US DEFENSE ATTACHES' AND MY CALL ON BRIG. GEN. ISMAIL, NORTH SUMATRA PROVINCIAL COMMANDER (KODAM II) FEB. 15, ISMAIL ACKNOWLEDGED THAT 21 STUDENTS HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN MEDAN, AS CONSULATE HAD LEARNED FROM OTHER SOURCES. HE ADDED THE INFORMATION THAT FOUR OTHER PERSONS SUPPORTING THE STUDENT MOVEMENT IN A MANNER THE MILITARY AUTHORITIES CONSIDERED QUESTIONABLE WERE ALSO ARRESTED. MOST OF THE STUDENTS ARRESTED, HE SAID, WERE FROM NORTH SUMATRA UNIVERSITY; ALSO THERE HAD BEEN ONE STUDENT FROM THE TEACHERS COLLEGE (IKIP), ONE FROM NORTH SUMATRA ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY (UISU), AND POSSIBLY ONE FROM THE MOSLEM RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE ARRESTED.

2. I ASKED GEN. ISMAIL IF HE COULD CLARIFY HIS STATEMENT MADE TO THE LOCAL PRESS FEBRUARY 11 THAT IN MEDAN "A CERTAIN GROUP HAS BEEN INSTIGATING TROUBLE TO DISTURB THE COMING MPR SESSION AND CLAIMING TO ACT ON BEHALF OF THE STUDENTS; THIS SMALL
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GROUP WAS ARRESTED ON JANUARY 21." FURTHER, HE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING, "IT IS GETTING MORE CLEAR WHO THE INSTIGATORS HAVE BEEN." COULD HE SAY, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE GROUP HE REFERRED TO WAS A MUSLIM ORGANIZATION SUCH AS THE PPP OR HMI? FAILING TO CLARIFY HIS STATEMENTS AT ALL, ISMAIL REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO POINT A FINGER AT ANY ONE GROUP SUCH AS THESE BUT THAT HIS INTENT WAS TO EXPOSE CERTAIN PEOPLE WHO

FORMED A SORT OF FRONT.

3. ISMAIL ADDED DURING THE CONVERSATION THAT THOSE ARRESTED WOULD BE HELD UNTIL INTERROGATION HAD ESTABLISHED THEIR GUILT OR INNOCENCE; THOSE BELIEVED TO BE GUILTY WOULD EVENTUALLY BE TRIED IN CIVILIAN COURTS UNDER THE INDONESIAN SUBVE
UION
LAW. HE DID NOT EXPECT ANY MORE TROUBLE FROM STUDENTS IN NORTH SUMATRA. (COMMENT: CONSULATE SOUNDINGS WOULD CONFIRM HIS CERTAINTY THAT THE STUDENTS HERE ARE UNDER FIRM CONTROL.)

4. THE ARRESTED UNIVERSITY RECTOR MENTIONED IN PARA 6 REFTTEL WAS UNDOUBTEDLY JUSUF BANGKUTI WHO IS KNOWN LOCALLY TO HAVE STRONGLY AND QUITE OPENLY ENCOURAGED STUDENT ACTIVISM AT UISU IN MEDAN.

5. DURING OUR VISIT TO BANDA ACEH FEB. 16, A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR TOLD ME THAT HE BELIEVED ABOUT 12 PERSONS HAD BEEN ARRESTED THERE, SOME OF THEM STUDENTS. BUT HE THOUGHT THAT THE REASONS CENTERED MORE ON SUSPICION THAT THEY WERE MEMBERS OR SUPPORTERS ON CAMPUS OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT FOR ACEH, RATHER THAN BECAUSE OF THEIR SUPPORT FOR GENERAL INDONESIAN STUDENT GOALS. THE PROVINCIAL COMMANDER, BRIG. GENERAL SALEH, WOULD NOT CONFIRM THAT ANY ARRESTS OF STUDENTS HAD BEEN MADE. HE SPOKE ONLY OF HIS HAVING ESTABLISHED IN THESE FIRST WEEKS OF HIS NEW COMMAND AN EXCELLENT DIALOGUE WITH THE STUDENTS AND OF
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HIS NOT ANTICIPATING ANY STUDENT TROUBLES IN BANDA ACEH DURING THESE FINAL WEEKS BEFORE THE MPR SESSION.
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